

Dolphin's Barn community gardens, left, is part of an attempt to create more green spaces — a peaceful rebellion compared to that of last May

Irish anarchists sow seeds of flower power

ARMED with saplings and spades, they strike under cover of dark. Anarchists are ditching street protests for flower power, turning disused city plots into blooming gardens.

Some of the group behind the Reclaim the Streets demonstrations have adopted "guerilla gardening" as the latest tactic in their campaign to take back public spaces for the community.

Three such gardens have been installed overnight, in Dolphin's Barn and Ballymun in Dublin and another in a derelict side street in Belfast. There are plans for "community gardens" on two other Dublin sites, in East Wall and on the banks of the Royal Canal.

In raids late at night, the activists from the Dublin Grassroots Network plant the gardens, which consist of vegetable patches and rows of saplings.

While the initial planting is undertaken covertly, once the plants and trees have been established the volunteers

These are positive activities where people are attempting to improve the urban environment

openly tend the gardens weekly.

On the Indymedia website the group says the project is "an attempt to address the lack of green spaces in our city. We are using the garden to grow food. We intend to engage with the local community. The garden is also a social space, giving us a chance to engage with other like-minded people".

One activist who gave her name only as Claire, said: "These are positive activities where people are attempting to improve the urban environment. People have found the gardening a particularly rewarding experience both as activists and in the community. There is no formal structure to these happenings — just people trying to do positive actions."

Whereas spontaneous street parties brought the activists into sometimes violent confrontation with gardai, culminating in the 2002 May Day protests, which led to 24 arrests, there has been little legal pressure on the latest initiatives.

Gardai visited the site of one

Scott Millar

community garden last month while the ad hoc gardeners were tending their plants, but allowed them to continue after being told what they were doing.

The most advanced garden has been planted along the banks of the Grand Canal at Dolphin's Barn where hazel, willow and apple trees have been planted along with rows of herbs and a vegetable garden.

Paul Baynes, one of the gardening activists, said: "Since we began work on this garden we have been in touch with the city council. They now have some of us working on a similar project in the Dolphin's Barn flat complex."

"It is not a case of us being unwilling to work with the authorities on these schemes, it is just better to get them up and going first. It's a case of if you want to do something, do it, and if people see it benefiting the community they will accept your work. The project is an attempt to address the lack of green spaces in our city."

"Other kinds of activism on their own can be frustrating. But the community garden is a form of direct action where you are in full control. There is none of the frustration of a large protest which is ignored by the powers that be, and none of the desperation of trying to change the system."

The ownership of the land where the garden was constructed is unclear. Dublin city council said Waterways Ireland, a state company that runs the country's canals and rivers, was responsible for the land.

However, some tracts of canal banks were leased to third parties over the past 100 years and are not directly under Waterways Ireland's control. This weekend, the company was checking its records to determine the ownership of the land containing the "community garden".

"We will be inspecting the site and will talk to the group and decide what is appropriate then," said a spokesman.

In Cork a similar scheme, by a group of professional gardeners, artists and community workers, has been integrated into the city's European city of culture celebrations. The Cork Mandala of Community Gardens has established seven garden areas in communities around the city.

Claire Osborne, an artist who came up with the concept, said: "The council has been very sup-

portive, insuring the scheme and donating plants.

"We are currently working with a number of communities, including members of the disabled and traveller community, to develop the gardens in a sustainable way."

She added: "It is a sociopoliti-

cal activity but that is not the key point. Rather, it is a way of sustainably developing community spaces and allowing people to develop new skills."

Baynes said it is hoped that the individual gardens dotted around the city eventually will be linked. "Some of us have a

vision of an unbroken greenway through Dublin city, encompassing the two canals, the Botanic Gardens, and the Phoenix Park."

"Green guerillas in New York have been transforming vacant lots into vibrant community gardens since 1973.

The May Day protests last year began peacefully with a party atmosphere in Dublin

4 Years of experimenting, learning, adapting, living



get your hands dirty this weekend

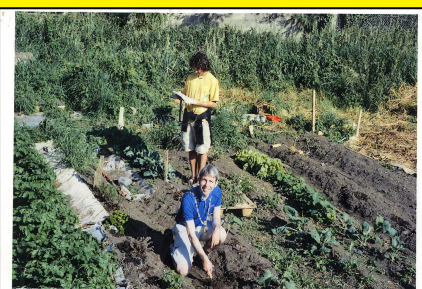
open community garden day this saturday 10am

- learn about planting your own food in the city
- meet and work with the garden crew
- share some food from the garden
- share views on how you would like to see it grow

Tree planting poster



Sheriff St kids plant trees



Deputy Mayor visits garden



Botanic Spine Greenway cycle



Participation in Irish forum



The garden crew were here



Community garden to close

A community garden project in Dolphin's Barn in Dublin is being forced to close up just a year after it was established. Inspired by similar projects in New York, Cork and Belfast, the garden was established in Dolphin's Barn in April 2005 on a small patch of disused land beside the Grand Canal. The land was untended and had been out of use since it was earmarked for a motorway proposal in the 1960s, but is now to be redeveloped.

The garden was established as a response to the lack of green spaces in the city, and to promote community interaction. Since then, trees, plants and vegetables have been planted and a significant amount of food has been cultivated by a number of volunteers who meet regularly to tend the garden. The project received the support of Dublin City Council and a grant of €600.

Since the Dolphin's Barn garden was established, other community garden projects have been set up around Dublin in Phibsboro and Stonebatter.

In March, the gardeners were informed that they would no longer be allowed to use the land, and since then trees and equipment have been removed by builders. A number of possible alternative locations for the community garden are now being investigated.

More: www.dolphinsbarn.org
CHRIS CONNOLLY



The Dolphin's Barn project inspired other community gardens in Dublin

Dublin Eco City Group

Greening the city, connecting communities



Strategies to change our world

- 1 - Dream boldly with much hope, positivity and passion
- 2 - Investigate cities green and blue spots
- 3 - Link these key points by greenway routes
- 4 - Create dialogue: Connect with communities
- 5 - Start bike rides along greenway
- 6 - Create nodal community garden points on greenway
- 7 - Turn greenway into CPUL (Continuous Productive Urban Landscape)
- 8 - Ensure all projects are open to everyone
- 9 - Celebrate and let it all grow organically

Our story

What started out with **BOLD PASSIONATE IDEAS** about what a **self sufficient city** might be, a strange ever changing group started experimenting in April 2005. **Collectively** they decided to not wait for others to sort their problems, they took direct action.

They imagined a **GREENWAY AND CPUL** for their city, Dublin. They freely gave out and helped plant native trees with different city communities along this route. They did many bike rides along the route.

They set up a **COMMUNITY GARDEN** and learned how to plant **food**. They set up another one on the other side of the city. After one year their first garden was evicted, they moved on and created another, they were evicted again. They moved again and finally found a **home**, they are still there now. At first many thought they were mad, now their gardens are being featured on the Irish TV news: offering one **practical solution** in Ireland's time of crisis.

NOTE; **CATALYST @ Botanic Spine** was an architectural thesis finished in Dublin in 2005 which generated theoretical ideas about Urban Greening systems. These ideas led to experiments that are represented here. An ongoing dialogue is in place to attempt to turn these eco urban ideas into realities.



THE SELF SUFFICIENT CITY
Dublin Eco City Group

- Envisioning the habitat of the future
- Panel 1: Strategies to change our world